



TAMLUK: A SELECTIVE STUDY OF SOME CENSUS REPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: East Midnapore or Purba Medinipur is one of the eighteen (18) administrative districts of West Bengal mostly associated with the ancient port city Tamralipta or Tamralipti. It is true to say that in pre-historic and historic period the sea-town Tamralipta was an important centre. It is probably the oldest Bengal town to which we find references in several sources i.e. both in archaeological as well as indigenous and foreign accounts. So many people came here for trading and educational purpose.

With the changes of long historical background the demography has also changed in Tamluk. The people in ancient period were come from multi-racial identity of pre-Aryan racial and religious beliefs. When the Aryan culture flourished the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religion also began to flourish. With the coming of the Mughals the Muslims came to settle here. Christianity came with the British. So a multi-dimensional race and culture emerged in Tamluk throughout the ages. Although diversity in race and culture are there but a kind of synthesis in culture has grown. The participation of the people of this region in freedom movement had proven this synthesis cultural belief. After all the growing population of today's Tamluk needed much attention to have a look on the past. All these will be discussed in the main discussion.

KEYWORDS: Tamralipta, Community, Urban, Municipality, Census, Population.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal is mostly associated with the ancient port city Tamralipta or Tamralipti.¹ The names of a large number of cities in ancient Bengal are known from epigraphic records, but the location of most of them is doubtful. We may locate with a tolerable degree of certainty Tamralipti (Tamluk).² "It is known that at the dawn of history Tamralipti (the modern Tamluk) was a great sea port".³

As Tamralipta was a janapada of Eastern India, so the people here were came from multi-racial identity of pre-Aryan races.⁴ The Roman writer Pliny (61 to 113 AD) had mentioned the name of a tribe called Talukot or Talucate who according to Macrinde, the translator of the 'Naturalis Historia', must be the people of the kingdom of 'Tamralipta mentioned in the Mahabharata'. According to Kanaksabhai Pillai: "Most of these Mongolian tribe emigrated to Southern India from Tamalitti, the great emporium of trade at the mouth of the Ganges and this accounts for the name 'Tamils' by which they were collectively known among the more ancient inhabitants of the Deccan. The name Tamil appears to be therefore only an abbreviation of the word Tamalitti." In another context he adds that "they were known as Tamils, most probably because they had emigrated from Tamalitti (Tamralipti), the great sea-port at the mouth of the Ganges."⁵

Even before the time of Neolithic and Copper age a kind of developed class emerged at Natshal village of Tamralipta janapada and they were engaged in artistic activities. Probably during the Gupta period the Aryans came there in 'Rarhbhumi' of which Tamralipta was attached.⁶ The inhabitants of Tamralipta were agriculturists on the one hand and traders on the other. Apart from these other occupations were there. We have the evidences of burned clay model and clay pottery collected from Tamluk, Tilda and Raghunathbari. These shows the efficiency of the artists during the ancient time. The artifacts were collected from eighth to fifth century B.C.

Regarding education system the medium were Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bengali, Magdhi and Souraseni. The children of upper class were educated by Brahmins and Buddhist 'Bhikshus'; and the lower sections were given lesson by 'Dom-pundits'. The Buddhist 'biharas' of Tamralipta became the centre of Buddhistsashtras and Sanskrit learning for Chinese travellers. Women education were also prevalent but freedom was limited. Dancing, drawing and sports were the different kinds of amusement for the people of ancient Tamluk.⁷

The prosperity of this town gradually decline from Eighth Century onwards and before that at the time of Seventh Century the Tamralipta Janapada came to be known as Dandabhukti Janapada. At Twelfth Century A.D. this Dandabhukti came under Bardhamanabhukti.⁸

Several theories attempt to explain the decline of the Tamralipta. One is that the river that linked the port city with the inland up to North India decayed.⁹ Another is that its prosperity was associated with the Roman empire, as revealed by some Roman coins found in the locality; and it collapsed with the fall of the Roman empire, and the dislocation of the sea route to Europe following its takeover by

the Arabs.¹⁰ In ancient time the prosperity of Bengal depended largely on the external trade. But the decline of Coins had effected very much. At the middle of Seventh Century the port of Eastern India had gone in the hands of Arabs.¹¹

Gradually Tamralipta began to ruin during the time of medieval period. As we have found the reference of Persian account of Shihab-ud-din Talish in Circa 1665 that Tamluk appears to have been a slave market.¹²

In Mughal times almost all Indian sea trade was under Arabs and Persian merchants. The Portuguese-Olondaz-Dinemar-French-English merchant communities started fighting among them to capture the trade after that.¹³

In the medieval period both the Hindus and Muslims lived in Tamluk. The lower class Hindus converted to Islam. During the middle of this period the Portuguese establishment in Hijli numbered approximately one thousands. Around three to four Churches were established by them and one of which was in Tamluk. Today we found the presence of some Christian communities at Mirpur village of Geonkhali region. That's why the name Mirpur came to be known as 'Firingipur'. Most people of Tamluk during that time were agriculturists. Other occupations were there as the earlier one. The Hindu, Muslim and local culture were in practice.¹⁴

The earliest kings of Tamluk belonged to the Peacock Dynasty, and were Kshattriyas by caste. The king Nisankha Narayan was the last king of this line, died childless, and at his death the throne was usurped by a powerful aboriginal chief. Kalu Bhuiya was the founder of this line of Kaibarta or Fisher-kings of Tamluk.¹⁵ An important landmark at Tamluk is a temple of the goddess Barga-bhima or Kali. The temple situated on the bank of the Rupnarayan¹⁶ and on the site of a Buddhist Vihara.¹⁷

The district of Medinipur had no boundary during the beginning of the British rule. The British changed the boundary of Medinipur many times from 1760-1805. In 1772 the East India Company constituted a Revenue Committee for revenue collection. The Hooghly Collectorate of Bardhaman and Medinipur were constituted in the year 1772-73 during which the Pargana of Jaleswar went to Medinipur. Hooghly, Hijli, Mahisadal and Tamluk became parts of the revenue council in November 1773. Bardhaman, Medinipur, Vishnupur, Pachet, Birbhum and Ramgarh were parts of the Bardhaman Committee. Bengal got divided into 28 districts in the year 1773 and the big districts were sometimes referred to as 'provinces'. Even in the Revenue Records Medinipur came to be known as Medinipur Province.

The districts of Hijli and Tamluk jointly started being called 'Nimak Mahal' in the year 1780. The year 1787 saw the formation of Collectorate.¹⁸ Tamluk originally formed a part of the 'Salt Districts' and the Collectorate of Hijli.¹⁹

The two large Fiscal Divisions of Tamluk and Mahisadal, which had till then been the separate jurisdiction of Hooghly were transferred to Medinipur on 10th February, 1790. Till the year 1836, Hijli remained a separate Collectorate

following which it was annexed to Medinipur barring Fiscal Divisions of Bhogral, Kumardachaur and Patashpur were transferred to Orissa district of Balasore. Bagri Pargana, which had earlier been part of Bardhaman, was annexed to Medinipur. After Patashpur, Bhogral and Kamardachaur were separated from Orissa, they were annexed in the year 1803. The Jungle Mahal district, constituted in 1805 incorporated Chhatna, Barabhum, Supur, Ambikanagar, Simlatal and Bhalladihi which had been taken away from Medinipur and formed parts of Jungle Mahal. The year 1806 saw the annexation of Maratha Parganas to Hijli Salt Agency.²⁰

In November 1851, tamluk was supposed to become a sub-division. It contained an area of 621 square miles, with 1522 villages or townships, 72,438 houses, and a total population of 467,817 of whom 424,075 or 90.7 percent. The sub-division comprised "the five Police Circles (thanas) of Tamluk, Panchkura, Maslandpur, Satahata and Nandigana".²¹

In 1870-71 it contained one Magisterial and Revenue Court, a regular police force consisting of 8 officers and 142 men-total, 150; and a village watch consisting of 1599 men.²² In 1901 the following tables of Midnapore district represented the towns with their population:²³

Names	Population
Midnapore	33,140
Tamluk	8,085
Ghatal	14,525
Chandrakona	9,309
Ramjibanpur	10,264
Khirpai	5,045
Kharar	9,508

Table No. 1: Population of Midnapore District in 1901

During 2001-11, the district Purba Medinipur has 4 (four) sub-division, viz. Tamluk, Haldia, Egra and Contai sub-division. There are 5 (five) Municipalities in the district namely Tamluk, Panskura, Haldia, Egra and Contai. Among these the Tamluk Municipality was the oldest one. It was established in 1864.²⁴ In 1860s Tamluk Municipality had a Municipal Board consisting of 12 Commissioners, of whom 8 were elected, 2 were nominated by Government and 2 were ex-officio members. The area within Municipal limit was 2³⁴ square miles, and the number of rate-payers was 2,072; represented 26.32 percent of the population residing within municipal limits. The average annual income of the municipality during the 10 years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 8,000 and the expenditure was Rs. 7,000. In 1907-08 the income of the Municipality was Rs. 10,835 (excluding an opening balance of Rs. 1,074) of which Rs. 3,400 were obtained from a tax on persons assessed at 12 annas percent on the annual income of the assessed, and a conservancy rate which brought in Rs. 2,327, while fees from markets realized Rs. 2,391. The incidence of taxation was annas 13 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 11,146.²⁵ We have a data of 1991 from the Census of India 1991 that the income of the Municipality from tax, revenue derived from municipal properties, Government Grant, advance, other sources (the total receipt amount) was 55,973 Rupees. A table representation is given below:

Receipt (in Rs. .00)						
Receipt through tax etc.	Revenue derived from municipal properties and power apart from taxes	Government Grant	Loan	Advance	Other sources	Total Receipt
7,003	1,057	45,145	...	1,527	1,241	55,973

Table No.2: Income of Tamralipta Municipality in 1991:

But in case of Expenditure we see the data was incomplete. Now we will come across the growth history of Tamluk town in different years through the population study. The table is given below:

1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
8,085	8,048	8,348	9,695	12,079	13,599	17,986	22,478	29,367	38,688
		(+3.73)	(+8.95)	(+32.81)	(12.58)	(+32.26)	(+24.97)	(30.65)	(+31.74)
		(-0.46))))))))

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Table No.3: The population of Tamluk town in different years:

During that time the Tamralipta Municipality has an area of 10.36 sq.kms. with 6,911 household including houseless households. Its density was 3,734 and sex ratio can be shown through the ages like:

1971	1981	1991
864	882	894

Table No.4: The Sex Ratio of Tamluk town in different years:

The number of females as per 1000 male gradually increased in comparison to the previous to the later. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population numbered as 2,469 in 1991. The road length of pucca road was 32.0 km. System of sewerage had two kinds, one was sewer and another was open surface drain. Regarding other civic amenities we have no data to show here.

While we are discussing about the features of Tamluk town medical and educational facilities need special attention. The total number of hospitals was 2 with 125 beds, dispensary numbered 5, T.B Clinics numbered 1 and Family Planning Centre counted 1 with 23 beds during the nineties of the twentieth century.

If we look into the Educational facilities then we will see 1 degree college for Arts, Science and Commerce, 3 Higher Secondary School/ Intermediate PUC (pre-University College/Junior College level), 2 Secondary matriculation, 3 Junior Secondary and Middle Schools, 31 Primary Schools and 1 Adult Literacy classes. Although these were not sufficient for the need of the town people.²⁷

Regarding the trade, Commerce and industrial facilities we came to know that the most important commodities of import were cunch, handloom cotton yarn and motor parts. The three most important export commodities are betel leaves, fish and handloom products. The important manufactured products are handloom products, cunch shell ornaments and ice.²⁸

In 2001, 19 wards were there in Tamralipta Municipality.²⁹ From the census of 1921 the following table will show the population, density per square mile and variation percent from 1911-21:

District Midnapore	Population 1921	Density per square mile	Variation 1911-21 percent
District Total	2,666,660	528	-5.5
Tamluk Subdivision	595,872	893	-0.9
Tamluk Police Station	98,899	979	}
Mayna	56,534	1,122	}-1.6
Satahata	74,887	764	+0.9
Panskura	138,390	923	-3.9
Nandigram	129,220	818	+0.2
Mahisadal	89,274	234	}
Gewankhali	17,968	781)+1.8

Table No.5: The Population Density per square mile:

The population of Tamluk Subdivision increased more than 10 percent between 1891 and 1901. It was increased 3.1 percent in 1901-11. Ever since the first census in 1872, it has been the water-logged country against the fringe of the uplands that proved decadent.³⁰

According to the Census of 1941 the Tamluk Sub-division had total 1,32,085 population with 1,405 per sq. area. Whereas 1961 Census showed us that Tamluk had its population per sq.km. around 1,361 persons, while in Midnapore district it was only 826 and in West Bengal it was 1021 which is smaller than Tamluk. It happened because of its alluvial plain land and healthy climate.³¹

The first market of Tamluk Municipality established in 1898.³² Regarding the road communication we came to know that in 1896 a road was there before Masjid, but not in a good condition. An effort had taken in 1920 and 1921 with the proposals taken by Baidyanath Saha Kundu for the expansion of this road. First bus service was started in 1913-14.³³ Before independence the condition of the roads of Tamluk Sub-division was not so good. The South-Eastern Railway starting from Howrah has entered this Sub-division through Kolaghat towards Mecheda, Panskura and Kharagpur.³⁴ Kerosene light was used before the introduction of electric light in 1952, with the initiative taken by local Electricity

Co-Operative Society. After that State Electricity Board acquired this Society.³⁵ In 1927, first Tube Well was found with the effort of Government at the north side of Hamilton. It was dug around 527 feet deep by Scot and Saxby Company. Municipality had tried in this regard with the help of Mahishadal Raj Estate. But as it was the time of No Tax movement of Non-Co Operation, so people moved against it by saying that they will not pay tax for this. Ultimately, the effort failed to success. Different ponds were used for drinking water purpose with the help of Municipality. After 1961 with the help of a big water tank Municipality tried to provide drinking water supply to the town.³⁶

If we try to show the total population, rural and urban population of the Tamluk subdivision of different years, we will observe a gradual population growth. Therefore a demographic changes certainly happens on this ground.

Year	1951	1961	2001	2011
Total	142,038	182,962	204,422	2,17,776
Rural	128,439	164,976	199,748	2,07,064
Urban	13,599	17,986	4,674	10,712
Tamluk (Municipality)	13,599	17,986	4,674	10,712

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From the above table it is very clear to see that the Tamluk town is basically the urban centre and business centre where the people from outside has come here to take the facilities but they are not the permanent inhabitants. Secondly a kind of urban to rural movement is happening.

Population of children with age of 0-6 is 6180 which is 9.46% of total population of Tamluk Municipality. In Tamluk Municipality Female Sex ratio is of 963 against state average of 950. Moreover child sex ratio in Tamluk is around 946 compared to West Bengal state average of 956. Literacy rate of Tamluk city is 90.18% higher than state average of 76.26%. In Tamluk male literacy is around 94.01% while female literacy rate is 86.21%. Tamluk Municipality has total administration over 14,489 houses to which it supplies basic amenities like water and sewerage.³⁸

The inhabitants of this subdivision are mainly Hindus of 86.87 percent and 13.10 percent were Muslims and few are Christians lived here. But by living here they are accustomed with Hindu customs. In the subsections of Hindus Mahishyas are main. Basically they are cultivators but in the field of society, economy and cultural sectors the Mahishyas got importance. Even in freedom movement their contributions made great achievement against the British. Apart from them Brahmins, Kayasthas, Poundrakshatriya, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Sutradhar, Swarnabanik, Gandhabanik, Sakhabanik etc. have settled here. Bengali languages are main language. But due to the adjacent Orissa and its past history with it some Oriya words and tones are used by the people of that subdivision.³⁹ The chief characteristic feature of the social organization of our place of study, as well as Bengal in ancient period, was the existence of innumerable castes and sub-castes. Thus the then society was divided in various strata namely the kom society or tribal society, the society guided by the Buddhist monks and sidhacharyas, the society controlled by the Brahmins etc.⁴⁰

During the long period of interactions and close relationships amongst the different communities, have been able, to some extent, to reshape the society and forge new relations, as well as, have caused forking of the society on religious grounds, involving some people, living in limited boundaries.

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